



Final Report

“We need to ensure that there are options to the car, and that we fund those options adequately.

We need to ensure that there is a safe route to school for kids, that it is safe to walk from your house to the drug store”

— Assemblyman Joe Nation
who, with his daughter, Kristen,
joined hundreds of Marin
County children in walking to
school on International Walk
to School Day, 10/2/01.
(p. 4, Safe Routes to Schools
Newsletter, Vol. 2, Issue 1,
Winter 2002).



Safe Routes to Schools Through Safe Communities

OVERVIEW

California's Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Initiative is based on an international movement aimed at increasing safe walking and bicycling to school. It is not just a “feel-good” issue for politicians to stand behind but real problems and real solutions with wide-reaching impact. Since the 1970's, there has been a dramatic reduction in children walking or bicycling to school. Instead, school children are being driven, primarily in private automobiles, which contribute to increases in local traffic-related injuries and deaths, traffic congestion and air pollution. In addition, these children are also losing an opportunity to be physically active, which contributes to increases in obesity, diabetes and asthma—chronic diseases that are currently seen at higher rates and younger ages than ever before. And, unfortunately, those children who still do walk and ride their bikes often face a very inhospitable environment. This lack of environmental support for physical activity thereby increases the children's risk of pedestrian and bicyclist injury, among the leading causes of death for youth in California.¹

¹http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/epicdata/Top5_kids.html

CALIFORNIA'S SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE

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“I think the Department of Health Services’ (DHS) SR2S program is important because it begins the initial planning, coordination and outreach that is essential to optimize the benefits of a capital improvement project that Caltrans’ SR2S program can fund...it serves as the perfect dovetail to Caltrans’ SR2S construction improvement program.”

—Randy Ronning, SR2S Program Director, California Department of Transportation

EXAMPLES OF SR2S COALITION REPRESENTATIVES:

- local government
- traffic safety
- health services
- community planning
- school administration
- parent/teacher/student associations
- local businesses
- parks and recreation

SR2S THROUGH SAFE COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC PLANNING GRANTS

Safe Routes to School through Safe Communities was administered by the Active Community Environments (ACE) Project of the Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and the California Department of Health Services (DHS). Funding for the project was provided by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and California Kids Plates. Technical assistance was managed by the State and Local Injury Control (SLIC) Section of the California Department of Health Services. Eight community groups were each awarded \$25,000 over a 17-month grant period.²



Safe Routes to School Projects

COUNTY	LEAD AGENCY
1) Shasta County	Child Abuse Prevention Council of Shasta County, Anderson Partnership for Healthy Children
2) Sacramento	California Bicycle Coalition, Sacramento Safe Routes to School Project
3) Marin	Town of Fairfax
4) Alameda	Bicycle Friendly Berkeley Coalition
5) Santa Clara	City of Palo Alto, Department of Planning & Community Environment
6) Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition
7) San Diego	Children's Hospital, Center for Healthier Communities
8) San Diego	Vista Community Clinic

The *Safe Routes to School through Safe Communities* planning grant project was implemented in 2000–2002. Local projects were responsible for developing a broad-based, community coalition in order to foster community ownership and to develop a strategic plan for the implementation of interventions. The program was designed to provide support for planning, *not* for implementation, since the basis of successful and sustainable programs is the ability to plan, rather than just react. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Safe Communities model guided project staff. The model uses an informed community-based planning approach that recognizes it takes time, commitment, and money to develop community support and “political will” to positively affect permanent changes in travel behavior.



²Duration of local projects varied from 7 to 20 months





OUTCOMES

The community-based planning process was designed to: 1) use available data to inform the planning process; 2) be highly collaborative by forming coalitions made up of representatives from sectors such as planning, health and education within the community; and 3) prepare the community to acquire resources & political will to implement the strategic plan that would move them toward a successful proposal for funding SR2S programs.

Each of the eight local projects encountered unique challenges and opportunities. Here is how they fared overall:

DATA: Grantees were asked to use data as the basis of their decision-making about where to mobilize their projects and what they would do. They found data from multiple sources, including collision/injury data from police and hospital reports; traffic counts and speed measurements; surveys of parents and children on the walkability of neighborhoods; and general demographic data. Grantees found that gathering data specific to the traffic situation in their communities was difficult, time-consuming, and, in some cases, costly (due to time spent extracting the necessary and desired information). Consultants were sometimes hired to help with this task.

Grantees were encouraged to use data in multiple ways, e.g., to assess community needs, interests and assets. However, due to the limited availability of data and expertise of coalition members, data was primarily used to help target particular sites to include in the project. In the end, a broader definition and exploration of data, “assets” and “indicators” might have assisted grantees in locating project partners and resources and in developing asset-based action plans.

COLLABORATIVE COALITIONS: Each project was modestly staffed using grant funds, with the intention that coalition members would volunteer time to work with staff to foster community ownership. While meeting attendance was considered “decent” for about half the projects, (average meeting attendance was 10 individuals, meeting frequency varied across coalitions from monthly to quarterly), the work itself often exceeded the budgeted staff time, in part because the delegation of tasks to coalition members was limited.

Shared workloads, especially among diverse partners, were a major challenge. The following are creative solutions recommended by SR2S projects to nurture collaboration and volunteerism:

- a) invite key players to take formal ownership of the project during the initial grant writing phase
- b) start by convening an informal entity that morphs as the project progresses
- c) convene smaller working groups that are site-specific, e.g., at each school, rather than one entity representing the needs of all schools within a district

All of the grantees felt it was important to recognize that the coalition was a collaborative rather than one-way process. It was important to both invite people to the table and let them participate when and in the best way they could.

DATA

- collision/injury data from police and hospital reports
- traffic counts and speed measurements
- surveys of parents and children on the walkability of neighborhoods
- general demographic data





“Typical accomplishments of the mini-grant recipients were hosting bicycle rodeos, developing an incentive program for using alternative transportation that made students eligible for a raffle at year’s end, bike helmet distribution, parent education efforts and student-teacher assemblies.”

— Santa Barbara final report

Everyone felt that there are critical relationships within their communities now that wouldn’t have formed without the project. The projects helped bring different departments within city agencies closer together, brought community groups with similar agendas to the same table, and gave parents a forum with local governments and school boards that they did not have prior to this project.

ACQUIRING RESOURCES AND POLITICAL WILL: Public awareness about SR2S came through a variety of community events (e.g., Walk to School Days, open house events and city council presentations). However, results were mixed on whether that exposure subsequently turned into participation and support for the project. Project locations that had the most success either had a history of traffic-related injuries or deaths near their schools, or had an already vocal public surrounding the topic, e.g., a Safe Kids Coalition or a parent safety committee at the school or school-district level. Overall, grantees felt it was critical to have the support of school administration; however, principals and school district superintendents were often the most difficult to reach, likely because of the many competing demands on their time.

Since the SR2S movement itself is gaining prominence nationwide, political figures in some of the communities were already aware of the issue and were prepared to support the action of the coalition. Still, educating the key stakeholders about the issue was an essential step in gaining and maintaining their buy-in. Grantees used presentations, one-on-one meetings, and information exchange through key partners (e.g., Parent Teacher Associations) to inform local government officials, legislators, school administrators and parents regarding the coalition’s efforts around SR2S. These and other methods used to gain buy-in are highlighted below.

BEST PRACTICES TO GAIN COMMUNITY SUPPORT

An important step in moving the issue of SR2S forward within a community, region, or state is gaining buy-in from the public and key stakeholders. This was an essential element in the grant program, and the grantees used tools appropriate to their given situations to achieve this buy-in. Some of the ideas that proved most successful were:

MINI-GRANTS: The South Coast SR2S Coalition in Santa Barbara used a mini-grant program to reach out to elementary schools. Schools received \$500 to implement creative solutions to their self-identified issues related to traffic safety. As reported by the coalition: “Typical accomplishments of the mini-grant recipients were hosting bicycle rodeos, developing an incentive program for using alternative transportation that made students eligible for a raffle at year’s end, bike helmet distribution, parent educational efforts and student-teacher assemblies.” (Santa Barbara, final report)

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND CITY-WIDE TASK FORCE: In San Diego, the coalition successfully gained political buy-in for SR2S with a presentation to the city council’s Public Safety & Neighborhood Services Committee. As a result, a new community task force with representatives from health, safety, planning and transportation, schools, and community members was convened to review and update citywide policies and warrants affecting pedestrian travel to school.





“Selected meeting times varied...allowing more people opportunities to participate....There was an informal, participatory atmosphere at the meetings which facilitated input and communication.”

— Palo Alto coalition member

This task force in turn led to the City of San Diego’s SR2S Task Force. The task force “will serve as an advisory body and clearinghouse for pedestrian issues. This task force ultimately will sustain the attention and action towards improving child pedestrian safety begun in Mid-City on a *citywide* level.” (Children’s Hospital, final report)

The Town of Fairfax in Marin County also used public presentations to gain support from community leaders. They prepared a PowerPoint slide presentation to profile the schools and surrounding community. “This presentation included the results of the [parent and student] surveys and slides of problem areas identified along the [school] routes. A “toolbox” presentation followed which offered possible solutions such as better crosswalks and traffic calming techniques.” (Town of Fairfax, final report)

WALK TO SCHOOL DAY: All communities with a SR2S project held events for International Walk to School Day on October 2, 2001. Some grantees held additional walk to school events periodically throughout the year, even weekly (Fairfax). These events proved incredibly successful in raising attention and providing education about SR2S. These events also were excellent at generating media exposure. Parents, children, school staff and administrators, local government officials and local businesses took part and contributed finances and incentive items as well. Walk to School events served as an opportunity for parents, city staff and officials to talk about safety around schools. Parents involved in the Sacramento project hosted a tour for city staff and officials, using walkability checklists to identify local problems and possible solutions firsthand.

WALKABILITY CHECKLISTS/SURVEYS: Coalitions used a data collection tool called a walkability checklist/survey during the project. These were simple checklists, making it easy and fun for children and community members to assess the quality of the walking environment around the schools. This process provided an opportunity for community members to contribute to the process by identifying particular problems and helping to craft solutions specific to their streets and traffic patterns.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EVENTS AND MATERIALS: Grantees were most successful at engaging community members in the project when they used culturally appropriate materials and events. Brochures, walkability checklists, walk to school day surveys and other printed materials were produced and distributed in languages that matched the community profile. These culturally appropriate materials were obtained from the Department of Health Services, private sources (e.g., automobile clubs), or produced in-house by grantees. The Townsite SR2S Coalition in Vista even held walking events on Cinco de Mayo, successfully combining traffic safety messages with the cultural heritage of the community.





KEY SIMILARITIES ACROSS COMMUNITIES

The grantees in this project came from different types of organizations/agencies and the communities varied greatly; however, the end goal was the same for all. While this variation makes it difficult to draw many comparisons across the project sites, some overall trends across the grantees clearly stand out:

- 1) ***The commonality is personality:*** Project sites with dynamic leaders who had positive personalities, good relationship-building skills and were politically and media savvy shared the greatest success at gaining community and political buy-in for SR2S.
- 2) ***Readiness to change is critical:*** As passionate and dynamic as the primary person or group might be, it is rarely enough to mobilize a community. The greatest success happened in those communities where other indicators existed that the community was ready to move forward on the issue of SR2S. For example, having school administration buy-in of the SR2S concept was essential. In contrast, significant school or community policies that may limit the population that can walk or bicycle to school (such as mandated bussing) or a prominent community voice that “just wants to move cars” were possible indicators of a community not being close to promoting increased walking and/or bicycling to school.
- 3) ***Think big, start small:*** A strategic plan that maps out a project’s overall vision is essential; But it is equally important for this plan to be grounded in small, measurable objectives in order to stay on track and have the opportunity for feedback and frequent, visible successes.

LESSONS LEARNED

All projects contain a bit of trial and error, especially when they occur in the uncontrolled environments of our communities. The grantees and the state-level coordinators of the overall program identified some lessons learned that they feel are important for other SR2S projects.

GRANTEES’ RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) ***Communication is key:*** Connect with groups in your community who are working on the same or similar issues. Communicate with these groups early on to prevent ‘turf’ battles or unnecessary work that duplicates what others have done. Plan to reach the broadest possible audience by using a variety of methods, such as targeted and town-wide mailings, telephone chains, and electronic communication.
- 2) ***Schools have agendas, too:*** Schools have requirements/mandates to meet, and their previously-established priorities may or may not mesh with the project’s agenda. For the grantees to work most effectively with the schools, it was necessary to find out a given school’s agenda and spin the program to fit it. Since many schools were concerned about test scores the grantees worked traffic safety and physical activity promotion into the curriculum in a

“The project has led to the involvement of community-based organizations that otherwise might not have become involved.”

— *Mid-City Safe Routes to School coalition member*





BEST PRACTICES:

- mini-grants
- public presentations and city-wide task forces
- Walk to School Day
- walkability checklists & surveys
- culturally appropriate events and materials

way that would help schools meet testing requirements/goals. In some instances, schools did not see that it was within their jurisdiction to address traffic concerns off school grounds. Grantees educated school officials on the benefits and relevance of active and safe travel to school.

- 3) **Identify an interested target population:** Some projects initially proposed to work in a geographically large area with many school sites to provide resources to the large community they already served. However, all local projects found that the topic of SR2S is an intense but fairly localized issue (both in terms of physical place and population served); therefore, it was more effective for most projects to work on a school-by-school basis as interest arose.
- 4) **Involve critical players from the get-go:** Certain entities will need to be involved in these types of projects (city planning/engineering; school districts; public safety; city health agencies, etc.). They should be invited to participate in the project from the beginning (e.g., at the initial grant-writing phase) in order to help shape the vision of the planning group, understand the commitment and share the workload.
- 5) **Everything takes longer than you think:** Getting a diverse group of people together with varying schedules and agendas takes time, as does getting them to plan, promote, and assist with events. Allow for the different operating speed of various types of organizational entities. A few grantees simply said “expect to get half as much accomplished as you think you can.”
- 6) **The value of data:** Data, although sometimes expensive and time-consuming to acquire, speaks loudly to potential partners, funding agencies, and the community. Realistically estimate the cost of purchasing data and the labor involved in attaining/analyzing it when preparing budgets. It is also important to recognize the increasing value of both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as data from multiple sources (e.g., police/hospital crash reports and community walkability checklists).
- 7) **Community visibility is important for buy-in, developing trust, momentum:** Your effectiveness and momentum will always be minimized unless people know you exist. Make yourself available to the community that you serve and realize that media exposure is a powerful tool in leveraging support.
- 8) **Agency capacity should match program guidelines:** In order to minimize bureaucratic delays in the project, it is important to determine that the fiscal and administrative capabilities of the host agency matches the requirements of the grant program guidelines.





This grant program successfully demonstrated that even a small amount of financial support goes a long way in allowing communities the time to stop, think, and work together toward the best solutions for a safe and active community of the future.

This report is produced by the Safe Routes to School Initiative staff at the California Department of Health Services, with grant funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety. September 2002.

PHOTO CREDITS: All photographs are from Walk to School Day events or Safe Routes to School projects in California. Thanks to Laurie Ahlf, Amanda Jones, Tracy McMillan, Anne Seeley and a few friends named Anonymous.

STATE-LEVEL PROGRAM COORDINATORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **No one “owns” Safe Routes to School:** While many programs are housed at one agency, SR2S is an issue that rightly belongs to many—public health, law enforcement, education, community design and development, and transportation planning, to name the obvious. The success of a SR2S program at the state and local level hinges upon the ability to identify resources and build relationships with a wide range of public agencies and non-government organizations. One agency doesn't have the breadth of resources to mobilize a community around SR2S.
- 2) **Prepare a pro-SR2S climate:** Local projects would have benefited from state support that laid the groundwork for them to recruit partners, gather data and identify funding to continue working on SR2S. Technical assistance for project staff and coalitions might include: access to language translators for community letters and flyers; presentations to state agency staff who liaison with local schools and traffic safety personnel; template presentations to orient school administrators and community members to the importance of SR2S, the project and its methods, e.g., data-driven decision making; and already prepared materials for the projects' early-win events, e.g., Walk to School Day.
- 3) **Sustainability can happen:** Some components of the SR2S projects continued in nearly all the eight communities after the grant period ended. Several sites successfully acquired operating funds from another source and/or found another entity to host the coalition. Project staff felt that successful relationships had been built with city staff, leading to funding for pedestrian and bicyclist safety projects as well as opportunities for SR2S to thrive in the future.



CONCLUSION

Safe Routes to School can promote physical activity, safety, sustainable transportation practices, and a sense of community. The Safe Routes to School through Safe Communities grant program was an experiment in providing people the financial support to develop strategic plans to improve the neighborhoods around schools for children to walk and bicycle more safely. This grant program successfully demonstrated that even a small amount of financial support goes a long way in allowing communities the time to stop, think, and work together toward the best solutions for a safe and active community of the future.



Safe Routes to School through Safe Communities Grantee Case Studies



LEAD AGENCY

Anderson Partnership for Healthy Children

(non-profit, community
collaborative)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Partnership conducted an assessment of the community's concerns regarding safe routes, and secured buy-in from public works staff but ultimately not from the initially targeted school district. Other agencies received grant funds for SR2S-related facilities and the Partnership chose to collaborate with them.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

One school in Anderson, which agreed to participate after the original target school withdrew from the project (after not receiving a SR2S capital improvement grant from Caltrans).

COMMUNITY SETTING

Rural/Suburban — Anderson (pop. 8,675) is considered a town center for the local area. Nearly 30% of residents age 25 or older have less than a high school education, and many children in this area come from low-income households and some come from homeless families.

COALITION

Safe Routes Coalition—a new coalition was formed as a subgroup of a well-established community collaborative, the Anderson Partnership for Healthy Children (APHC—a broad cross section of community groups, parents, schools, service clubs, health care providers and government agencies) and the Injury Prevention Coalition of Shasta County. The 12–15 coalition members met 3–4 times. Key players included a school principal, parents, community members, representatives from Shasta County Public Health Department, Anderson Police Department, Shasta County Sheriff's Department, Caltrans, and the Shasta County Injury Prevention Coalition.

STAFFING

Planned: Executive Director of Child Abuse Prevention Council (5% FTE), Project Coordinator (20% FTE), and Clerical Support (7% FTE)

Reality: In addition to the paid staff time, the project utilized volunteers from VISTA, Americorps and the local senior center for grant writing, Walk to School Day, and bike rodeos. In-kind staff support came from Shasta County Public Health Department, the participant school, Caltrans, and Anderson Police Department.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 86%—staff; 14%—operating expenses (equipment, communications, travel)

Leveraging of other funds to support project: California Highway Patrol—funds for bicycle rodeo

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Data from Shasta County Injury Profile (1991–95), the coalition's SR2S walkability checklist, existing data provided by the Injury Prevention Coalition of Shasta County, local health organizations, local law enforcement, and schools



TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- TV/newspaper coverage for Walk to School Day
- Distributed educational brochures with walkability checklist
- Used Americorps youth and Senior Center volunteers for bicycle rodeos
- Adopt-A-Bus Stop program

MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- School and community members became disillusioned during early days of the project due to anticipation, and subsequent disappointment, that they would receive Caltrans grant funding
- Lack of buy-in from Happy Valley School District Superintendent, which halted participation of the original target school
- Given the very rural layout and subsequent limited infrastructure of the area, community members felt it was not feasible for children to walk and bike from home to school
- When the target school changed, it became difficult to rally support of parents and community members regarding fall events, because the school could not serve as liaison during the summer
- Inability to obtain buy-in from community members and/or leaders who were engaged in more pressing safety and social issues than SR2S within school vicinity (e.g., drug-related crime, registered sex offenders, murders, fires, poverty and unemployment)

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Children and families/neighbors in project area: Increased attention regarding the community's need for bike paths, safer biking/walking on rural roads; alleviated safety concerns of students and parents about stray dogs

Local schools/district: New bike lanes for students at Happy Valley (funded by Public Works); however, school became increasingly resistant to the time and effort required to participate in the project and address SR2S issues

Local government officials/staff: Increased awareness regarding the community's need for bike lanes; commitment to regularly patrol for stray dogs

TALES OF SUCCESS

- Resolved issue of primary concern to children who turned in walkability checklists: stray/scary dogs along school route. Law enforcement agreed to continue patrols for loose dogs
- The Walk to School Day brought good visibility and media attention to the issue of walking and bicycling to school
- Raised community awareness of need for safe mode of travel to school (e.g., bike paths could also serve as walking paths that are safer than the existing ditches along the narrow roadside)

LESSONS LEARNED

- Need to improve communication within/between community groups to prevent duplication of effort (e.g., on future grants)
- Prior to the project, the small town atmosphere of this community seemed to be an ideal setting for improving walking and bicycling safely to and from school. However, it became clear that planning and implementing SR2S programs in rural areas is difficult, because of the lack of sidewalks, money, and awareness

HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- Funding from Public Works for proposed bike lanes in Happy Valley
- Anderson Police Department has agreed to take over Walk to School Day in 2002
- Plans to distribute refurbished bicycles, furnished by Shasta County Sheriff's Department, to Anderson kids in need
- Providing bicycle/skateboarding racks for the new Anderson Teen Center
- The Anderson Public Works Department received a SR2S grant from Caltrans, and the Shasta County Department of Public Health received funding for a Safe Routes to School project. Lead agency staff will continue to collaborate with both projects.

PROJECT LENGTH

12+ months



LEAD AGENCY

California Bicycle Coalition (CBC)

(statewide non-profit,
transportation)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project initially proposed to work with 6 schools within a specific high school catchment area which, using data analysis, had traffic safety problems. Mid-way through the project, lead agency staff determined that schools self-identifying a traffic safety problem were more likely to participate. Using school-site working groups, 5 elementary schools conducted the project's short-term planning process and held events to gain awareness and support for the program, such as Walk and Bike to School Day.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

Five schools were recruited through school district newsletters, Safe Kids Coalition and the City of Sacramento. Selected schools had traffic safety problems (e.g., fast traffic) that were barriers to students walking and biking to school.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Urban/suburban, moderate/low-income, multi-ethnic and immigrant populations (Hmong, Russian Ukrainian and Spanish). English is not the first language for many of the parents.

COALITION

The project was not able to maintain an ongoing broad-based coalition due to members' competing priorities. However, working groups of parents and school staff or administrators were developed at each school site. Each working group assisted project staff with developing the strategic plan for its school.

STAFFING

Planned: Project Coordinator (50% FTE); Supervisor (3% FTE)

Reality: Program Manager (50% FTE, 100% FTE x 2 months); CBC Executive Director (3% FTE)

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 80% — Staff; 10% — Rent; 10% — Office Expenses (mail, printing, supplies)

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Statewide injury database (SWITRS), local police data and Surface Transportation Policy Project on pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities

TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- Conducted parent education regarding traffic safety using translators for the Spanish- and Hmong-speaking communities. This was a key factor in gaining community support as traffic laws may not exist or are rarely enforced in the parents' original homeland
- Walkability checklists to document barriers to children walking or biking to school
- Parent Working Groups specific to each school site
- A series of Neighborhood Clean-up Days, followed by Walk and Bike to School Day events
- Raffles, pizza parties to gain interest and participation from students

CALIFORNIA'S SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE

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website:

www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school



MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Because the lead agency was a statewide agency, it was not established in the local community. Project took longer to get off the ground because staff had to build relationships
- Lack of coordination between various agencies providing traffic safety education
- Limited funding for incentives, additional staff and to develop multi-lingual materials
- Local politics
- Difficulty in identifying property ownership in order to resolve existing problems
- Inability to implement suggestions in strategic plan for wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, etc., due to Caltrans' jurisdiction over road designated as state highway. The project's strategic plan conflicts with the existing road improvement plans

Significant impact of the project

Children and families/neighbors in project area: became more aware of traffic safety issues and importance of regular physical activity, empowered families to take action and speak out about barriers facing students walking and biking to school, parents from hard-to-reach families became involved

Local schools/district: schools benefited from parental involvement, increased communication between hard to reach parents and school staff/administration, identified resources for schools to address traffic safety problems (e.g., foundations, Caltrans grants for SR2S, Pedestrian Safety, Environmental Justice Grants, foundations, etc.)

Local government officials/staff: increased awareness of traffic safety problems around school zones; communication with citizens who have been previously unrepresented due to language and cultural limitations; increased working relationships among city/county staff (e.g., public works, city council, mayor)

TALES OF SUCCESS

- Translators at parent meetings 1) empowered parents from immigrant communities to voice their concerns and suggestions and 2) provided them with education on traffic safety in a language they could understand
- Parent-led walking tours provided hands-on education for local elected officials, school district administrators, Caltrans staff, city and county officials, and other interested individuals
- Participation and/or financial support of local businesses for Walk Day/Clean-Up Events
- Resources for teachers to conduct classroom activities before Walk Day events

- Separate Walk to School Day events were organized for schools/children that were out of session when the International event was held. (Many elementary schools in California are on a multi-track, year-round calendar)

LESSONS LEARNED

- Imperative for project staff to have local community connections
- Obtain commitment from schools prior to submitting grant applications
- Parents can be powerful allies
- Language translators are critical to obtain parental involvement, feedback and empowerment
- Look to programs that have established relationships with schools (e.g., Healthy Start) for key allies
- Collaboration can maximize limited resources and is crucial when multiple agencies have similar goals and/or target audiences
- Local politics can impede collaboration
- Culturally appropriate educational materials and incentives can help achieve program visibility and community acceptance
- This type of project is difficult for a small agency that does not have resources to provide in-kind support

HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- School district is willing to take SR2S district wide
- Parent safety groups were established at each participating school
- Schools have a strategic plan in place that can be used to secure additional funding for improving students' ability to walk/bike to school
- Schools will have ready-access to the lead agency for SR2S information
- A citywide SR2S coalition was formed in March 2002 that will serve as an oversight committee for SR2S projects implemented in Sacramento. Members will analyze data to guide the expansion of the SR2S program
- Caltrans SR2S grant application for Pacific School (review is pending)
- Additional funds for Safe Routes to School secured as a result of project: Caltrans SR2S grant for Noralto School; \$10,000 Kids Plates grant to expand SR2S program in the Natomas school district

PROJECT LENGTH

20 months



LEAD AGENCY

Town of Fairfax

(public agency)

The Town of Fairfax (public agency) worked with Multi-Mobile (non-profit) for project management and the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (non-profit) to implement in-school projects and traffic safety education as they have in other Marin County communities.

Marin County Bicycle Coalition is internationally recognized for organizing successful SR2S programs; resources previously created for other pilot programs are available to the public and were utilized by the Fairfax project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The goal of the Fairfax Safe Routes to School (SR2S) planning grant was to expand their existing SR2S Task Force, plan and implement in-school interventions, leverage supplemental funds, and conduct a public design charrette to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions along Sir Francis Drake (SFD) Boulevard. The Fairfax project was key in making improvements happen along SFD (e.g., to calm traffic and improve walkability) and expanding the project into a countywide program.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

Schools along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (one public school, one private) in the Town of Fairfax. Parental concerns include traffic safety (76%), speeding cars (31%), dangerous street crossings (20%), and inadequate sidewalks and bike paths (43%). Injury data from 1/96–9/99 found that 28% of injury collisions on SFD Blvd involved pedestrians or bicycles, and 16% of the injured/killed were <18 years old.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Suburban/Rural. A small, incorporated town of 7,184 residents, primarily white (94%), over age 18 (79%), highly educated (58% completed some college), and earning a more moderate income than the rest of wealthy Marin County. Easily walkable and bikeable, with a small geographic area of 2.1 square miles.

COALITION

A prior SR2S Task Force was developed in Fairfax, and membership represented Fairfax Town Council, Public Works, Police Department, the town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the library (located across from one of the project schools), parents, neighbors, and local businesses. This existing Task Force expanded its membership during the grant to include two other schools along SFD. Approximately 70 individuals attended at least one meeting or contacted the Task Force, and an average of 6–8 attended each meeting (1–2/month, approx. 20 total). Attendance by community members and the Parks and Recreation Commission was limited. The business community (Chamber of Commerce) did not attend meetings, but supplied prizes.

STAFFING

Program Director (~10% FTE, consultant); Education Coordinator to teach pedestrian/bicycle safety and develop curriculum for interested teachers (~10% FTE, consultant); in-kind printing/duplicating resources were provided by the Town of Fairfax and coalition members; engineering consultant contracted to conduct a Design Charrette, a pre-charrette assessment, and prepare an evaluation report.

CALIFORNIA'S SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE

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Marin County has been a pilot site for SR2S programs, with funding from multiple sources. The Marin County Bicycle Coalition and Multi-Mobile have shared their SR2S program expertise and many tools with other communities, in California and internationally. A recently developed tool kit will enable any individual or school to start a SR2S program in their community. It provides easy to read steps and resources. The toolkit can be accessed on the web (www.saferoutestoschools.org) as a PDF download or by going to specific sections.



ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of DHS funds: 10% — Staff; 16% — Office Expenses (mail, printing, supplies); 66% — Consultant (project director, engineer, and classroom instructor); 8% — Other (materials, training expenses)

Leveraging of other funds to support project:

- \$50,000 from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for National Model SR2S for county program
- \$25,000 from the Marin Community Foundation for countywide program
- \$165,000 from Transportation Enhancements Activities (TEA) for sidewalks on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard
- \$40,000 from Transportation Development Act Article 3 Funds (TDA Article 3) for sidewalks on Center Boulevard

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Injury data from 1/96–9/99, regarding collisions on Sir Francis Drake; walkability survey data from parents, students, and Task Force members

TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- Walk to School Day events
- Media coverage
- Encouragement programs and contests, e.g., “Frequent Rider Miles” contest, bike rodeos and “Bicycle Jeopardy” game in the schools. (See side bar)
- Community meetings, banners, flyers, and town-wide mailings regarding SR2S events and improvement plan/recommendations
- Two “open house” events (one convinced Parks and Recreation to pay for a “Slow It Down” banner)
- Personal postcard invitations to city officials and key decision makers
- Newsletter publication of the Task Force’s improvement plan
- Radar trailers (4 specific locations)
- Design Charrette (interactive workshop)

MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Inability to enforce (i.e., with radar) the 25 MPH speed limit between two schools, yet resistance to raising limit due to “85th percentile” speed policy
- Keeping people involved in the program outside of the core group
- Opposition and controversy over added crosswalks, signals

- Difficulty filling crossing guard positions, even when money was allocated by the school district and Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Children and families/neighbors in project area: increased kids’ independence, mobility, choices, and responsibility; educated about walking/biking for health, safety, and environmental protection; reduced traffic volume (e.g., new signals and crosswalks), especially on Walk to School Day; visibly increased numbers of walkers/bikers (continue to see improvements), so community sees the value and positive impact of SR2S

Local schools/district: healthier, more alert kids that walk/bike to school; SR2S educational program used as a supplement to the school’s physical education curriculum

Local government officials/staff: helped maintain support of Mayor and Town Council; Fairfax Police Department increased use of radar and enhanced patrol regimen for traffic safety

TALES OF SUCCESS

- “Frequent Rider Miles” contest rewarded walking, biking, carpooling and riding the bus
- Created classroom interventions/lessons for physical education classes on traffic safety that promoted learning in English, Science, Math, Environment and Health (e.g., basic traffic safety, walking obstacle course, bike rodeo)
- Bike rides with the Program Director and Task Force members to identify key areas of concern
- New and improved (i.e., re-paved, re-striped) bike lanes on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Center Boulevard
- Approximately 75 feet of new sidewalk is in progress, to improve pedestrian safety and access to one of the schools
- Two schools have documented an increase in walking, biking and carpooling. In Spring 2000, at Manor School 24% of children walked or biked, 15% were in carpools and 61% were driven alone. By Spring 2002, 32% of children walked or biked, and 31% were in carpools. At St. Rita’s, walking doubled from 5% to 10%.
- Received sponsorship from Specialized Bicycles
- Collaboration with San Anselmo Police Department to offer free training for crossing guards in the Town of Fairfax.
- Media coverage for Walk to School Day events created great awareness by both the public and local officials
- Identified funding for crossing guards at private school and the public Ross Valley School District will assist with recruitment of guards



LESSONS LEARNED

- The importance of data—methods of collecting it and reporting it will provide credibility to SR2S. Put effort into getting surveys and vital statistics together
- Contact by mail is not as effective as personal contact. Mailed meeting announcements and agendas kept Task Force members informed, but phone calls might have improved their participation
- Orient school administrators (especially the principal), as needed, to the importance of data collection for the project so teachers will conduct surveys and return them in a timely manner
- Have a person unrelated to the project conduct traffic surveys
- Create and distribute short, to-the-point reports, and post the detailed reports on a web page
- Sometimes the most “politically expedient” project needs to be chosen over the higher priority project, in order to create visible, short-term success and increased buy-in

HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- County support will expand the Fairfax program countywide
- Local matching funds available to supplement grants
- School support for weekly Walk/Bike/Scoot to School Days
- A “Slow It Down” banner will periodically hang at the town’s entrance, encouraging motorists to drive safely
- Traffic signs prohibit right-hand turns at crucial intersections
- Three new pedestrian warning signals were installed

PROJECT LENGTH

14 months

“FREQUENT RIDER MILES” CONTEST

- Children are asked to keep a tally card of the number of times they walk, bike, carpool, or ride the bus to school
- When they accumulate 20 points, they turn in their card for an immediate reward and are entered into an end-of-the-year raffle that will offer a number of prizes, including a new bike and a Diggler (a combination bike and skateboard)
- Sample prize donations from local bicycle shops and manufacturers include assorted kids gloves and apparel, handle bar grips, scooters, baskets, and blinkies



LEAD AGENCY

Bicycle-Friendly Berkeley Coalition

(non-profit, transportation)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Safe Routes to School (SR2S) project in Berkeley used school-based coalitions to educate children and parents on the importance of a safe and active trip to school and worked with city staff to identify potential safety solutions around schools.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

The project had originally planned to target all public schools in the City of Berkeley but narrowed the focus to three schools in the City of Berkeley that expressed an interest in the project.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Urban (10 sq. miles, densely populated), multi-ethnic, low to high income population.

COALITION

Safe Routes to School through Safe Communities—School-based Safe Routes teams/coalitions were formed at each target school and an overall advisory board assisted in community-wide efforts. The coalitions at each school were made up of Healthy Start coordinators, principals, teachers and parents, while the SR2S Advisory Board had representatives from the local pedestrian advocacy group, the City's Transportation Commission, Bicycle-Friendly Berkeley Coalition board members, parents and city staff. This approach allowed each school to focus on their unique problems related to safety and enhance neighborhood participation. Members of the Berkeley Unified School Board and the mayor of Berkeley were supportive of the overall project.

PROJECT STAFFING

Project Director (40% FTE)

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 80% — staff; 10% — print, mail, supplies; 5% — early win event; 5% — consultant

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Berkeley's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Task Force Report was used to find high collision spots in the community, especially those around targeted schools. The lead agency conducted parent and child surveys at all participating schools to assess local concerns about walking and bicycling safety. City staff trained the project staff to conduct searches on a statewide injury database to assess local traffic injury history (SWITRS).

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TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- Using PTA/Healthy Start meetings to present the topic of child safety and activity to parents with city and project representatives present
- Walk to School Day (WTSD) at six schools in conjunction with the national event on October 2, resulting in good media exposure
- A well-publicized community forum to increase community awareness and provide an opportunity for local officials and residents to discuss barriers and solutions to walking and biking



MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Working with the bureaucratic structure of the city
- Making SR2S a priority for the schools and school district
- Prevalence of students who are bussed to schools beyond their neighborhood

SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Children and families/neighbors in project area: increased education and awareness of the SR2S topic. Parents became crossing guards and school safety patrol members

Local schools or district: increased awareness by principals, teachers and school board members

Local government officials or staff: the Mayor of Berkeley put a directive on the council agenda for the engineering and planning departments to improve their collaboration for SR2S projects

TALES OF SUCCESS

- Repainting drop-off zones and crosswalks and installation of fluorescent school zone signs
- Walk to School Day was successful in exposing children to the activities of walking and bicycling
- School board proclamation of Walk to School Day
- A City-wide forum on SR2S brought representatives from the schools, city departments, city council, transportation commission, school board and parents to the table to discuss walking and bicycling activity, safety and education
- A city-wide SR2S Awards Banquet was held at the end of the school year to celebrate achievements and honor those most involved in the campaign

LESSONS LEARNED

- Include funding for data collection in the program budget
- More schools are not necessarily better; progress at a couple of schools is better than inaction at many
- Contacting administrators about participation in the project early on will help to develop a broader base of support and a more realistic plan for action
- Moving to a structure of school-based coalitions rather than a city-wide coalition increased neighborhood interest and participation

HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- The coalition leveraged funds to extend the project (~\$2,500 — Peet's Coffee Berkeley City Golf Championship)
- The bicycle coalition will continue its work with city departments and Councilmembers on commitments made, and will apply for new funds to support walking and bicycling activity and safety
- The coalition will continue with press releases about planned events (bicycle/pedestrian assemblies and city-wide strategic planning meetings planned for the spring) and intends to team up with a new sustainable transportation coalition (BEST) to help keep the project alive

PROJECT LENGTH

20 months



LEAD AGENCY

City of Palo Alto
Department of Planning &
Community Environment
(public agency)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

City staff involved residents near a problem intersection to resolve street/sidewalk visibility problems (i.e., overgrown vegetation), which resulted in a safer corner for all forms of traffic (especially pedestrians). They were also successful in conducting Walk to School Day events, increasing police enforcement, and increasing crosswalk safety (signage and red curbs).

TARGETED COMMUNITY

Five schools in two neighborhoods (Ventura and Barron Park), separated by El Camino Real, a state highway. There is a high rate of youth injury (30% of reported pedestrian/bicycle crashes in the area) crossing the south El Camino Real corridor and adjacent streets.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Barron Park neighborhood, a recently annexed area, is somewhat rural, with no sidewalks. Ventura neighborhood is suburban, has a large minority population, and is higher density and lower income than Barron Park.

COALITION

A new Safe Routes to School (SR2S) coalition was formed with broad-based representation of community members, representing all the schools in the area, community groups, and residents who don't belong to community groups. Only a few formal meetings took place, but participants felt they had an informal, participatory atmosphere, which facilitated input and communication. E-mail was helpful in facilitating ongoing communication among coalition members, since it was hard to convene on a regular basis.

STAFFING

Planned: Project Manager (15% FTE) and Project Assistant (15% FTE)

Reality: Project Director (~5% FTE) and Project Coordinator/Intern (~100% FTE, but moved on to another job before the end of the project)

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 79% — Staff; 1% — Office Expenses (printing/duplication); 20% — unexpended

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Statewide injury database (SWITRS); traffic counts (speed and volume); block maps; field surveys (e.g., walkability checklist); aerial photography to evaluate infrastructure along school route; Parent Teacher Student Association and School District enrollment data

TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- Door-to-door contact to resolve street/sidewalk visibility problems (i.e., overgrown vegetation)
- Walk to School Day (WTSD) (including walking school busses)
- Increased police enforcement of parking and visibility rules (emphasizing warnings and increased awareness rather than punishment)

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MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Limited staffing; difficulty recruiting and retaining part-time staff
- Getting people to attend coalition meetings on a regular basis
- Disagreement among coalition members regarding bike lanes
- Disagreement with another community group regarding desirability of (a) moving cars vs. (b) accommodating bikes and pedestrians along this stretch of the state highway
- Difficulty institutionalizing “walk days” or “way-to-go days” (promoting biking, walking, carpooling), because Walk to School wasn’t a priority for school administrators
- Local data was central to project’s strategy; but some data was hard to obtain (e.g., enrollment, demographics, trip-to-school by mode)

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Children and families/neighbors in project area: improved traffic safety resulting from visibility improvements; recommended/suggested school commute routes for a new middle school opening 2003; raised collective awareness via press from statewide program

Local schools/district: increased awareness about SR2S and related issues/programs

Local government officials/staff: involvement at events (e.g., Walk to School Day); increased advocacy for visibility legislation; new partnerships among City departments will facilitate future inter-departmental collaboration

TALES OF SUCCESS

- Project staff encouraged neighbors to take initiative with traffic safety improvements (e.g., removing overgrown vegetation on the property) and to rally community buy-in for safety issues and awareness of the City’s Visibility Project
- Constant and in-depth communication brought together partnership of appropriate City departments (e.g., public works, utilities, and city arborists)
- Support of law enforcement and elected officials (e.g., parking enforcement and WTSD involvement)
- Funds to implement fluorescent signage and red curbs near crosswalks

LESSONS LEARNED

- Need to allocate more time within the project timeline for event planning and communication
- Begin communication across City departments earlier in the process, preferably when preparing an application, in order to foster collaboration and select project objectives that meet each other’s departmental goals

HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- Funding application for SR2S grant from Caltrans
- The project helped facilitate traffic calming projects by conducting traffic counts along the main collector streets of Barron Park
- Project staff provided input on school commute routes for a future middle school

PROJECT LENGTH

7 months



LEAD AGENCY

Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition

(non-profit, transportation)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Santa Barbara County project focused on: 1) pedestrian and bicycle safety education and 2) building program support for Safe Routes to Schools at schools and in the community. A unique and successful project provided mini-grants to schools. Through the project's efforts with the schools, the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and the community, school safety zone projects have become eligible for local community rehabilitation funds through the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG). Better curriculum materials and trained instructors now exist within the community for the schools to access for bicycle and pedestrian safety education.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

The focus was on the "South Coast" communities within Santa Barbara County (the incorporated cities of Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, and the unincorporated areas of Goleta, Isla Vista, Montecito and Summerland). The project originally planned to target all 30 schools in the three school districts but narrowed the focus to those schools that expressed interest. Ten schools participated in the mini-grant program and seventeen schools participated in the second year of Walk to School Day (WTSD).

COMMUNITY SETTING

Suburban, with a largely Caucasian & Latino population of diverse socioeconomic status

COALITION

South Coast Safe Routes to School Coalition—while initially planned to be a new coalition, logistically and financially it was more beneficial to augment an existing coalition with non-profit status (Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition). The Safe Routes coalition was made up of representatives from the City & County of Santa Barbara, Traffic Solutions, Air Pollution Control District, local businesses, County Public Health Department, City of Santa Barbara Police Department, Sheriff's Department, Santa Barbara Area Council of PTA, Santa Barbara County Council of Governments, local parents, Cottage Hospital and Caltrans District 5, with 80 partners overall, with approximately 20 who were active at the monthly coalition meetings.

STAFFING

Planned: Two Co-Directors (each 5% FTE in kind), a Project Coordinator (15% FTE in kind), and other public agency staff time (in-kind) were budgeted for.

Reality: The original hope that the project would take root at the school level and lead to shared responsibility and workload did not really occur. Consequently, the workload was much higher than projected. A paid staff position of about 20 hours per week could have reduced the workload of the in-kind staff positions.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 20%—print, mail, supplies; 50%—graphic design, marketing materials; 20%—reimbursements or grants to schools and community groups; 10%—training & curriculum materials

Leveraging of other funds to support project:

Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services—\$300 to print WTSD posters

Family Services Agency—fee waived for booth at Family Services Festival

Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District—printed rulers and stickers for distribution at public events

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DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The coalition decided to be guided more by community/school interest and its awareness of a traffic problem than by the limited data that did exist. Original police crash data did not record all the injuries in the school zone and were too few to identify problem areas. Maps with crash-injury data were produced in the fall of 2001 after the project was underway. School-specific community assessments were also done at each participating school to assess potential traffic problems.

TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- Creating a mini-grant program that allowed schools to define their own issues and solutions related to traffic safety and then apply to the coalition for grants of \$500 to implement their own programs
- WTSD and Bike to School Day (BTSD) held in conjunction with national programs (WTSD on October 2 and Bike to Work Day in May)
- Utilizing individuals and organizations with established connections to key stakeholders (e.g., PTA with school administration) to spread the coalition's message

MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- School participation: administrators were focused on getting kids to pass tests and sometimes felt that problems off the school grounds were outside their jurisdiction
- Delayed reimbursement from the state threatened the project's credibility with schools and community members who were promised mini-grants; local staff used personal funds to pay mini-grantees and waited for reimbursement
- PTA's participation was initially contingent on all schools being included in the project, but this arrangement was successfully renegotiated

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Children and families/neighbors in project area: increased awareness and empowerment of how to make requests to the city (Santa Barbara) and schools for traffic safety. The project also increased access to information; the county has seen an increase in public participation at traffic engineering public hearings

Local schools or district: became more sophisticated on public works decision-making and who to call for action on a traffic-related issue

Local government officials and/or staff: increased awareness of existing bureaucratic processes and ticketing policies (e.g., traffic fines in school zones) that may run counter to safe routes to school efforts.

TALES OF SUCCESS

- The mini-grant program. Typical projects of the mini-grant recipients were hosting bicycle rodeos, developing an incentive program for using alternative transportation that made students eligible for a raffle at year's end, bike helmet distribution, parent educational efforts and student-teacher assemblies
- The Walk to School Day/Bike to School Day had high value in the community and brought good visibility and media attention to the issue of walking and bicycling to school
- The coalition worked with a local representative who championed an assembly bill to permit jurisdictions within the counties of Ventura and Santa Barbara to adopt double fines in the school zone ordinances
- The development of a community safety marketing plan, including a series of six public service announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish. Two videos of the series have been prepared and funding is being sought for the remainder
- All school crosswalks were re-striped and signage was upgraded to new fluorescent color
- Traffic operations updated all schools' preferred travel routes maps
- Portable speed trailers were used for schools on high volume streets to prompt drivers of speed limits

LESSONS LEARNED

- An active volunteer base is important
- Project goals should match project resources
- Identify groups and individuals within the community with similar interests for potential partnerships
- Schools have pressures for children to test well; try to make safety fit within a "testable" curriculum
- Holding meetings in conjunction with another group (e.g., PTA) may reduce meeting demand on individuals but could reduce attention being paid to the SR2S topic
- Optimize existing resources-housing the coalition at an umbrella organization with a diverse base of volunteers and a matching but broader topic area may be a better use of resources and can eliminate possible redundancy (real and perceived) of non-profit topic areas
- It is optimal to have a host agency that has the financial and administrative capacity to handle a reimbursement-based grant program



HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- SBCAG (Santa Barbara County Association of Governments) has made the Safe Routes to School project eligible for local community rehabilitation funds
- The Safe Routes to School coalition is moving to another existing coalition in the community (Coalition for Sustainable Transportation-COAST) more broadly focused on sustainable transportation
- Applications for funding through the Caltrans Bicycle Transportation Account will be made twice in 2002, with an emphasis on creating projects relevant to the trip to school
- The project directors and coordinators will continue to seek grant funding from local benefactors for the public service announcements, helmet distribution and promotion of safe routes to school

PROJECT LENGTH

15 months



LEAD AGENCY

Children's Hospital

Center for Healthier Communities

(non-profit, community
health services)

“In the future, the coalition will most likely play an important role in obtaining funding to implement traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented safety programs.”

— *Lara Evans,*
City of San Diego
Planning Department

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project in San Diego focused on increasing political and programmatic support for pedestrian and bicyclist safety. While the project itself targeted three school sites in one neighborhood of San Diego, the impact of their efforts were felt city-wide because of their close work with the City of San Diego Planning, Transportation and Police Departments and their communication strategies to engage city officials. The project achieved significant success at moving Safe Routes to School higher up on the city's agenda, leveraging future funds for Safe Routes to School in San Diego and in changing city policies related to pedestrian safety.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

Three elementary schools in the Mid-City neighborhood of the City of San Diego. The Mid-City neighborhood was selected based on data from Children's trauma department and the County Emergency Medical Services, while the schools to target within this neighborhood were identified through police department data.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Urban—a densely populated, multi-ethnic, low-to-mid income area.

COALITION

Mid-City Safe Routes to School Coalition — A new coalition was formed for this project, made up of a “diverse, multidisciplinary group of people concerned about child pedestrian safety who may not otherwise have come together. Members represented local schools, parent teacher organizations, law enforcement, faith communities, traffic safety organizations, local media, local health centers, city agencies, Mid-City for Youth Collaborative and California Institute for Transportation Safety. The City of San Diego's Transportation, Planning and Police Departments, the City Council Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, and each school's safety officers were key players. Average attendance at monthly meetings was approximately 20–25 individuals

STAFFING

Planned: Project coordinator (20% FTE) and Mid-city coordinator (15% FTE), with 13% in-kind support to maintain the coalition

Reality: The budgeted time to staff and maintain the coalition was not unreasonable, but additional activities (e.g., Walk to School Day (WTSD), advocacy efforts in the community and with city officials) demanded more time, especially for the Project Coordinator position. The project had originally envisioned more delegation across coalition members, but because of multiple demands on other people's time, a core group did much of the work.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 57% — staff; 34% — traffic consultant; 9% — travel and small improvement project

Leveraging of other funds to support project:

- Safe Communities 2000+ — \$6,000 for the translation and printing of educational materials during project period
- State Farm Insurance — \$5,000 for route marking signs and t-shirts to make children visible
- National Safe Kids Coalition — \$2,000 for supplies and incentives
- Think First Injury Prevention Program, City of San Diego, Planning Department, Federal Express and Allstate Insurance provided over \$7,000 worth of monetary, in-kind, and/or volunteer time donations for the Walk to School Day event



DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

At the outset of the project, police reports of collision data were used to identify schools to target. Observational surveys in the school neighborhoods were conducted by coalition members to pinpoint problem areas. A traffic consultant videotaped those areas over a period of time and interviewed parents and students. After analysis, recommendations were given for environmental improvements.

TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- A Walk to School Day celebration in 2001 on International Walk to School Day was held, with involvement from the school, parents, police, city and local businesses. The event included an assembly for parents to voice concerns to city and project staff about their children's travel to school. Parents learned who to talk to in the future about these concerns. Educational materials for WTSD were developed in five languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Somali) for students and parents

MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Maintaining the project's projected timeline in the face of competing timelines of partner organizations

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ON TARGET COMMUNITY

Children and families/neighbors in project area: increased awareness of traffic safety and provided vehicles for sustained input and participation into the community planning process through community forums and parent safety committees at each school

Local schools or district: became more aware of the need to focus on pedestrian safety. Issues around a new school siting also brought to light the need for improved methods of communication and coordination between school districts and city departments, such as city planning, transportation and police.

Local government officials and/or staff: brought people who had not previously discussed these issues with one another to the same table. The increased communication and collaboration resulted in a city-wide task force and the update of the outdated City of San Diego School Pedestrian Safety Manual.

TALES OF SUCCESS

- A presentation before City Council's Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee to educate local representatives about Safe Routes to School spurred collaborative action across city departments and a review of school pedestrian safety policies
- The creation of 1) the City Manager's Working Group on Pedestrian Safety to revise the School Pedestrian Policies and Warrants and 2) a city-wide Safe Routes to School task force to look at the issue of Safe Routes to School across the City of San Diego
- In 2001, the City of San Diego successfully competed for several Caltrans Safe Routes to School construction grants, one of which focuses on a target school in this project
- The award of an Injury Free Coalition for Kids project site from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; its first initiative will be a Safe Routes to School project in Southeastern San Diego

LESSONS LEARNED

- Engage key stakeholders as early as possible (i.e., at grant writing stage) so that they are involved in the idea's conception, workload distribution and identification of resources to support the project's effort
- It is important to identify the appropriate individual(s) from each department/organization to participate in the project to avoid stepping on toes
- Time demands will fluctuate throughout the project (more time needed in August–October if holding a WTSD event); try to forecast accordingly to avoid shortfalls (monetary and staff-wise)
- Cultivate connections that can further develop your project's goals. Despite the extra time that may be involved, take advantage of unexpected (unbudgeted) opportunities to sell the project (e.g., presentations before city council, participation on citywide task force). The unanticipated may yield great outcomes



This case study continues on next page



HOW SR2S WILL BE SUSTAINED

- The City Manager's Working Group on Pedestrian Safety is working to revise each section of the School Pedestrian Policies and Warrants, determine a process for community input and set a timeline for completion and reporting. Updating the warrants will allow more flexibility in the response from City departments to address recommended changes
- Partially as a result of the coalition's efforts, the recently formed City of San Diego Safe Routes to School Task Force will serve as an advisory body and clearinghouse for pedestrian issues. "This task force ultimately will sustain the attention and action towards improving child pedestrian safety begun in Mid-City on a citywide level" (Children's Hospital final report)
- City staff feel that the coalition will continue to be a important resource for the city: "In the future, the coalition will most likely play an important role in obtaining funding to implement traffic calming and pedestrian-oriented safety programs" (Lara Evans, City of San Diego Planning Department)
- Additional funds for Safe Routes to School secured as a result of project:
 - California Department of Transportation — \$873,000 for infrastructure improvement grant around one of the project's target schools
 - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation — \$250,000 to establish Injury-free Coalition for Kids site

PROJECT LENGTH

18 months



LEAD AGENCY

Vista Community Clinic

(non-profit, community
healthcare clinic)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Townsite Safe Routes to School project targeted five schools within the Townsite neighborhood in Vista, a city 45 miles north of San Diego. The coalition engaged public safety officers and community leaders in the grass roots effort to promote children's safe walking and biking. The project successfully gave residents a voice in community decision-making and in creating events and materials that were culturally appropriate.

TARGETED COMMUNITY

Five elementary and middle schools located within or in close proximity to the Townsite neighborhood of Vista. The neighborhood has a history of problems with gangs and violence, safety, poverty, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and unemployment, and high dropout and expulsion rates. In a neighborhood survey conducted in 1997, 41% of residents said there are places within one mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone.

COMMUNITY SETTING

Suburban, mostly Latino (two-third) and Caucasian, low-to-mid income population

COALITION

Townsite Safe Routes to School Coalition — a new coalition was formed for this planning grant. The Safe Routes to School coalition was made up of representatives from the Vista Townsite Community Partnership, City of Vista, Vista Unified School District, local officers in the San Diego Sheriff's Department, local residents, and the Vista Community Clinic. The coalition had approximately 10–12 members and met quarterly.

STAFFING

Planned: Program coordinator (10% FTE in-kind), Health Educator III (40% FTE)

Reality: The project had originally envisioned more delegation across coalition members; however, staff managed virtually all project responsibilities.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

Use of project funds: 62%—staff; 10%—travel; 28%—other

DATA USED IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Local data such as a neighborhood survey conducted in 1997 by the Vista Community Clinic was used to determine existing conditions and need for change. *The Annual Report of Fatal and Injury Report Motor Vehicle Traffic Collisions—1998* from the California Highway Patrol was used to document collision rates in Vista. The project also reviewed crash data from the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. The crime analysis staff created a detailed map of the Vista Townsite Area that outlined traffic-related collisions within the vicinity of the targeted schools. Demographic data was obtained from the Vista Unified School District on each of the five targeted schools. Observational surveys were done in the neighborhood by project volunteers.

CALIFORNIA'S SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Attn: Anne Seeley
or Barb Alberson

California Department
of Health Services

611 N. Seventh Street, Suite C
Sacramento, CA 95814
toll free 888-393-0353

walkday@dhs.ca.gov

website:

www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school



TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT

- The project's strategic plan was developed during a series of community meetings, resulting in a report designed to engage community members as well as local leaders
- The coalition held two walking events: A Walk to School Day (WTSD) celebration in 2001 on International Walk to School Day, which had involvement from the school, children, parents, police and local community leaders. A Cinco de Mayo celebration included a walk, bicycle rodeo, health fair and bicycle helmet giveaway

MAJOR PROJECT OBSTACLES

- Recent immigrants to the community did not know California's traffic safety rules
- Collaboration among some agencies was difficult due to unclear roles and responsibilities

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ON TARGET COMMUNITY

Children and families/neighbors in project area: increased education and awareness of safe walking practices and community resources. It provided residents with an opportunity to speak about their safety concerns with local leaders

Local schools or district: increased education and awareness of safe walking practices and community resources

Local government officials or staff: opened lines of communication between community residents and local leaders/city staff about concerns and needs in the neighborhood

TALES OF SUCCESS

- The culturally-relevant walk held in conjunction with Cinco de Mayo was a big hit since Vista has a large Latino community. Parent and child participation was high and it was an opportunity for education, media exposure and business support
- Electronic speed monitoring signs were placed throughout the neighborhood during the project to raise awareness of drivers' traffic speeds vs. posted speed limits

LESSONS LEARNED

- A coalition needs a balance of organizers and doers
- However much time you estimate to do something (e.g., collect data, plan an event), double it!
- Culturally relevant events are important tools to reach a community
- Non-profit agencies can successfully involve residents who may distrust government agencies by tailoring the project in ways that nurture their trust

SUSTAINABILITY

- The project continues beyond this grant period in two ways: the Vista Town-site Community Partnership will coordinate Walk to School Day, and they have a \$500 grant for implementation. They and city staff are guided by the project's strategic plan, and will implement designated improvements as funding and opportunities allow

PROJECT LENGTH

12 months

This report was prepared by Tracy E. McMillan, MPH, and Kimari Phillips, MA, CHES, under independent contract with the University of California, San Francisco Institute for Health and Aging.

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